

Date:

The second coming of Jesus

PRAY Father, as I near the end of my journey through the Bible, help me to get a clear understanding of the essential Jesus.

READ Revelation 21:1 – 22:21

REFLECT

When I start reading a novel, I often turn to the back and scan the last few paragraphs first. Some people think that ruins all the fun, but I like to find out who will be left standing by the end of the story (shows you what kind of books I read!). In a sense, that's what we're doing in our passage today; the last paragraphs of the Bible give us a glimpse of the greatest happily-ever-after conclusion we could ever imagine.

As we've discovered, the Book of Revelation is a vision that John had a few decades after the resurrection (1:9,10). In the first three chapters, the focus was on specific messages from Jesus to seven first-century churches. In the last two chapters the focus has switched to the end of the world, and we discover that God intends to establish 'a new heaven and a new earth' (21:1). That's an encouraging thought when we consider what's happening in the world today.

There are probably a few things about this passage, like the rest of Revelation, that you find difficult to follow. Let me remind you again that, like in a dream, it's the main point that's most important rather than every little detail. And the main point is very clear. In the end, Satan is defeated (20:7–10), the curse of sin is broken (22:3) and God the Father and God the Son will be present with us: 'Look, the home of God is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them' (21:3, NLT). What an incredible vision that is!

For those who belong to Christ, the end of the world is only a new stage of the eternal life begun when they first met him. That's the Bible's greatest story and that's at the heart of the **EssentialJESUS** story.

APPLY How does God's plan to establish a new heaven and a new earth affect the way you live now?

PRAY Lord, I look forward to the day when I'll see your face. Help me live my life with that end in mind. Come, Lord Jesus...

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: THE SECOND COMING OF JESUS

After you've completed the five readings in this section, get together with another person or group to talk about the things you've learned. Begin by sharing the insights you gained from your own reflection on the passages. Then use the following questions to help you continue the conversation.

- 1 How do you feel about the state of the world today? Does it seem worse, better or the same as it's always been? Explain your answer.
- 2 How would you respond to a friend who says, 'Look, after two thousand years I think it's safe to assume that Jesus *isn't* going to come back. Maybe Jesus meant it as a figure of speech rather than a literal promise'?
- 3 Have you ever run into a view of 'the end times' that doesn't seem to square with what the Bible says? How does it compare with what you learned in **EssentialJESUS**?
- 4 What's your rationale for making things better in the here and now when God is going to create a new heaven and a new earth anyway?
- 5 Some Christians say that, in light of the return of Christ, the only thing that matters is evangelism and that we shouldn't waste too much time on things like peace, justice, poverty and the environment. What do you say?
- 6 What is your view of heaven? What will it be like, who will be there and how can you be sure you'll be among them?
- 7 In what ways does your view of the second coming of Jesus affect the way you live today?